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Nebraska Schools, Child Care Programs Save \$1 Million in Food Costs

Lincoln – Nebraska school districts and child care programs will keep more than \$1 million in food transportation and warehousing costs this school year after the Department of Health and Human Services applied for and received reallocated federal funds to pay the costs, according to Thomas Pristow, director of Children and Family Services.

CFS directs the distribution of domestically grown U.S. Department of Agriculture donated foods to schools and child care programs, which have paid the distribution costs in the past.

Pristow said DHHS Food Distribution applied for the funds this year, which will pay for nearly all administrative expenses and food distribution costs.

"We're glad our application for these funds was approved so we can help take some financial pressure off schools and child care programs in providing food to children," Pristow said. "We will continue to apply for the funding as long as it is available."

The U.S.D.A. supports domestic agriculture by purchasing surplus commodities and in turn providing the foods to states in support of U.S.D.A. Child Nutrition programs, he said. The U.S.D.A. funds used to purchase food are not tax dollars, he said, but are from duties imposed on imported goods and services. Domestically grown foods are supported by U.S.D.A. by purchasing surplus commodities, he said.

In another cost-savings move, DHHS arranged direct shipments of U.S.D.A. foods to several large school districts, avoiding state transportation and warehousing costs. Cost savings from this effort are expected to exceed \$300,000, Pristow said.

U.S.D.A. foods make up about 18 percent of all food served at Nebraska's schools, he said. During the 2013-14 school year, DHHS Food Distribution moved over 250,000 cases of U.S.D.A. foods or about 8 million pounds of donated food.